(ii) Prescription of scales of finance for crop loans as worked out by the technical committees constituted in each district for various crops and their uniform adoption by banks.

(iii) Disposal of loan applications upto Rs. 25,000/- within a fortnight and those over Rs. 25,000/- within eight to nine weeks.

(iv) Delegation of appropriate sanctioning powers to rural branch managers so that majority of loan applications from weaker sections are sanctioned at branch level itself.

(v) Liberal guidelines in regard to requirement of collateral security by way of mortage of land/charge on land or third party guarantee.

(vi) No margin is required for agricultural loans upto Rs. 10,000/- for short term, medium/long term.

(vii) The public sector banks have introduced the Agricultural Credit Card for farmers with good track record which enables farmers to secure production credit instantly and dispense with procedural formalities;

(viii) To ensure timely and adequate credit for sustaining agricultural production, banks have been asked to extend a flexible line of credit in the form of cash credit facility which would meet their composite credit requirements. (ix) Banks have been asked to finance high-tech activities like aquaculture, floriculture, tissue-culture, bio-technology, etc.; and (x) Banks have been asked to draw up special credit plans with a view to acheiving a distinct and marked improvement in the flow of credit to agriculture.

Evasion of excise duty by corporates and PSUs

2360. SHRl RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to a newsitem published in the Financial Express, New Delhi edition dated 30th July, 1996 captioned "Top Corporates, PSUs lead in MODVAT evasion".;

(b) if so, the top ten corporates and PSUs leading in evasion of excise duty during 1996-97 as compared to 1995-96 indicating total loss to the exchequer on this account; and

(c) what remedial measures Government have taken so far to check this alarming trend of excise evasion rise amongst such corporates, PSUs and SSIs?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBRAM): (a) to (c) The information is being collected from all the Commissionerates and will be placed before the House after compilation.

Increase in import duty on paper

2361. SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to impose 40 per cent import duty on paper as against the existing duty of 20 per cent;

(b) if not, whether Government are considering to allow import of paper without any duty;

(c) whether Government are considering to remove actual user condition presently imposed on the paper industry for imported waste paper and pulp; and

(d) whether Government are also considering to give exemption to State text book corporations from payment of excise duty for the relief of educational sector?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Some representations have been received for increasing the basic customs duty on paper and paperboard from 20% to 40%. These are under examination by the Government.

(c) At present, the actual use condition applies only to wood pulp imported for the manufacture of newsprint. There is no proposal under consideration to remove this condition.

(d) In the Union Budget, 1996, full exemption from excise duty has been extended to specified writing and printing paper supplied by a paper mill to State Textbook Corporations/